

Short communication

Potential Role of Community Pharmacists in Managing Drug Interactions; a Public Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Community pharmacists are key players for finding and preventing drug interactions in health care system in developed countries. In Norway more than 750 community pharmacies are providing health care services to the local community. Community pharmacists are actively engaged in providing better health care and pharmaceutical services to patients. Medical practitioners are well aware of the role and importance of community pharmacists and this will provide extra check and balance on them and ultimately better patient care. Medical practitioners as well as specialists are in direct contact with community pharmacist to manage different drug interactions. Here we report the survey conducted among 150 patients, who came to pharmacy to pick up their prescription and using more than one medicine for a chronic disease in province of Akershus, Norway. Survey was anonymous and it explains the purpose of data collection. The result presented here in this manuscript indicates that 85.35 % patients are extremely satisfied from the role of community pharmacists in finding and informing patients about the drug interactions while rest of 14.65 % are not satisfied from the role of community pharmacist and they need more professional engagement of the community pharmacist. This report concludes with comments that community pharmacists are doing active role in maintaining patient safety and providing them better pharmaceutical services.

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Drug interactions are extremely important cause of adverse drug reactions (ADR) and it is important that community pharmacists have good understanding of this issue. This issue was identified 100 years ago.

Drug interaction is defined as when effects of one drug are changed by the presence of another drug, food, drink or an environmental chemical agent. The alteration of the effects can be synergistic or additive, antagonistic or idiosyncratic.

In the recent years the role of community pharmacists have been increased to include more health care activities and health care education such as patient counseling for risk management for interventions to improve compliance (O'Loughlin *et al.*, 1999). Providing drug information is an important task of the community pharmacist (Hayashi, 2003). Although pharmacist is considered as expert of medicines but public also support the non- medical role of pharmacist such as healthy living advice. Extending the role of the community pharmacist such as drug interaction management will only be effective if new roles are what consumers want and find acceptable (Shani and Shemer, 2000; Iversen *et al.*, 2001). Pharmacists have become active

patient consultant and health care confidants (Panas and Brandys, 2008).

Recent study was aimed to investigate the role of community pharmacist in managing drug interactions in a public perspective and how much public is satisfied with this role and how pharmacist can improve his presence and role as medicine expert in health care system.

We have collected data from 150 patients from different pharmacies in the district Akershus, Norway. A questionnaire based on the different role of pharmacist at community pharmacy was collected and analyzed statistically. The questionnaire investigated whether the patients are satisfied with current roles of community pharmacist or not in managing drug interactions. Close ended questions with the options (yes, no or do not know) and open comment sections were used.

Data was analyzed by using SPSS for Windows 8. Characteristics of responders were compared using descriptive statistics was computed on sample characteristics and the questionnaire items. Inferential statistics used Student's t test and one-way ANOVA.

This study was aimed to investigate the role of the community pharmacist in the managing drug interactions. Community pharmacists can play an important role in identification, assessment and preventions of drug related problems in patients (Vinks *et al.*, 2006). Pharmacist plays an important role in providing pharmaceutical services to the general public (Kwint *et al.*, 2012).

In the current study a large number of patients (85.35 %) were extremely satisfied with the role of pharmacist in managing drug interactions and providing information related to their medicines while remaining (14.65%) are not or partially satisfied from the current role of the pharmacists (Figure 1). Most of the patients were using more than one drug (Figure 2) and suffering from both acute and chronic diseases (Figure 3).

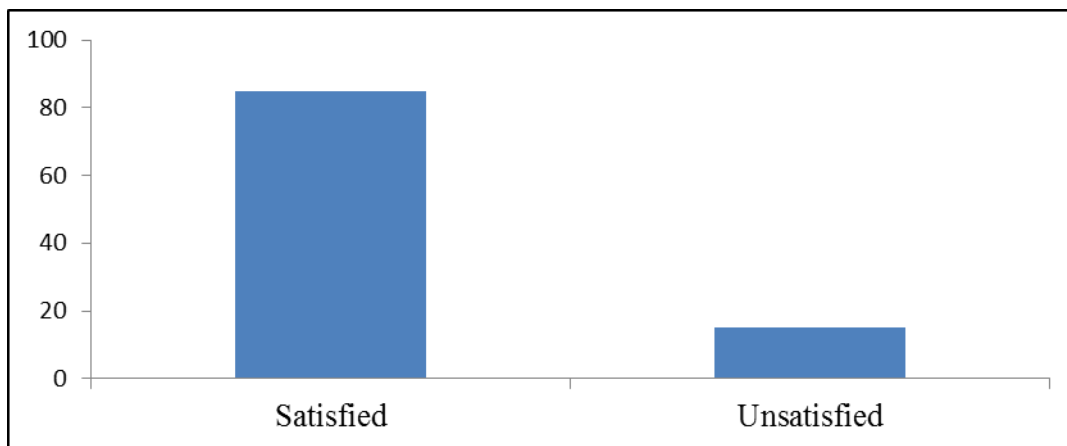


Figure 2: Drug interaction management. Different colors mentioning number of drugs per prescriptions

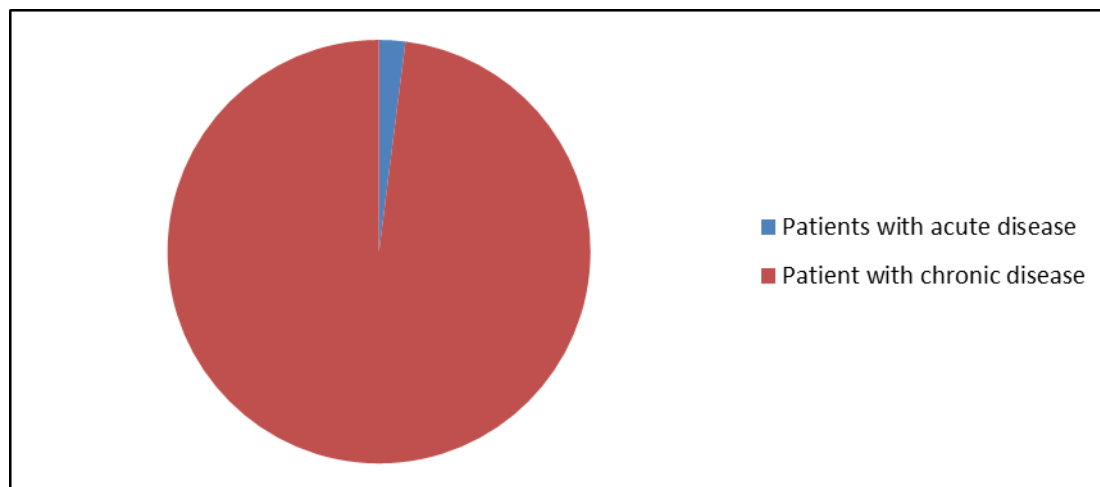
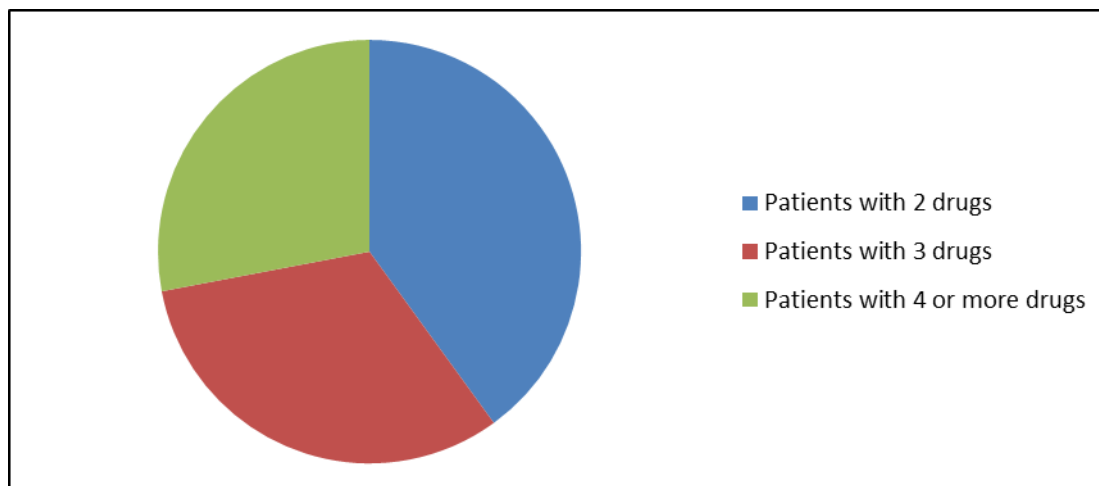


Figure 3: Patients with different diseases both acute and chronic

The limitation of this study is that the sample size will not reflect the sample of whole Norway. However this study will be an important contribution in the field of community pharmacy in exploring the dynamic role of community pharmacist in managing drug interactions at community pharmacies.

We conclude that most of the public is extremely satisfied with the role of community pharmacist as health care provider in managing drug related problems including identification, assessment and correction of drug interactions.

However this role can be improved while empowering pharmacist at community level and engaging pharmacist more actively in other health related problems.

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